
ORATION:

DELIVERED

MARCH SIXTH, 1775.

482



BRITISH MUSEUM

A N
O R A T I O N ;
D E L I V E R E D
M A R C H SIXTH, 1775.
A T T H E
R E Q U E S T of the I N H A B I T A N T S
O F T H E
T O W N of B O S T O N ;
T O
C O M M E M O R A T E the B L O O D Y T R A G E D Y
O F T H E
F I F T H of M A R C H, 1770.

By Dr. JOSEPH WARREN.

TANTE MOLIS ERAT, ROMANAM CONDERE GENTEM.
VIRGIL'S ÆN.
QHI, METUENS, VIVIT, LIBER MIHI NON ERIT UNQUAM.
HOR. EPIS.

B O S T O N :

Printed by Messieurs EDES and GILL in Queen-street, and by JOSEPH
GREENLEAF in Union-street, near the Market.
M, D C C, L X X V.

AT a meeting of the freeholders and other inhabitants of the town of BOSTON, duly assembled at Faneuil-Hall, and from thence adjourned to the Old-South Meeting-house, on Monday the 6th day of MARCH, Annoque Domini, 1775.

UPON a motion made, *Voted unanimously*, That the thanks of the Town be, and hereby are, given to Dr. JOSEPH WARREN, for the *elegant and spirited* ORATION delivered by him at their request, in commemoration of the horrid MASSACRE, perpetrated on the evening of the 5th of March, 1770, by a party of Soldiers of the XXIX Regiment, under the command of Capt. Thomas Preston; and that,

Mr. Samuel Adams, Hon. John Hancock, Esq; Benjamin Church, Esq; Mr. John Pitts, John Scollay, Esq; Colonel Thomas Marshall and Mr. Samuel Austin,

Be a committee to wait upon Dr. JOSEPH WARREN, and, in the name of the town, desire a copy of the ORATION for the press.

Attest,

WILLIAM COOPER, Town-Clerk.

Upon application made, the copy of the ORATION was sent with the following message,

GENTLEMEN,

THE same motives which influenced me yesterday to appear before my fellow citizens, induce me to deliver this copy to you,

I am with the sincerest Respect,

Your most obedient

Servant,

JOSEPH WARREN.

MARCH 7th, 1775.



A N
O R A T I O N.

MY EVER HONOURED FELLOW-CITIZENS,

IT is not without the most humiliating conviction of my want of ability that I now appear before you : But the sense I have of the obligation I am under to obey the calls of my country at all times, together with an animating recollection of your indulgence exhibited upon so many occasions, has induced me once more, undeserving as I am, to throw myself upon that candor which looks with kindness on the feeblest efforts of an honest mind.

You will not now expect the elegance, the learning, the fire, the enrapturing strains of eloquence which charmed you when a LOVELL, a CHURCH, or a HANCOCK spake ; but you will permit me to say that with a sincerity, equal to their's, I mourn over my bleeding country : With them I weep at
her

her distress, and with them deeply resent the many injuries she has received from the hands of cruel and unreasonable men.

THAT personal freedom is the natural right of every man ; and that property or an exclusive right to dispose of what he has honestly acquired by his own labor, necessarily arises therefrom, are truths which common sense has placed beyond the reach of contradiction. And no man or body of men can, without being guilty of flagrant injustice, claim a right to dispose of the persons or acquisitions of any other man, or body of men, unless it can be proved that such a right has arisen from some compact between the parties in which it has been explicitly and freely granted.

If I may be indulged in taking a retrospective view of the first settlement of our country, it will be easy to determine with what degree of justice the late parliament of Great Britain have assumed the power of giving away *that property* which the Americans have earned by their labor.

Our fathers, having nobly resolved never to wear the yoke of despotism, and seeing the European world, at that time, thro' indolence and cowardice, falling a prey to tyranny ; bravely threw themselves upon the bosom of the ocean ; determined to find a place in which they might enjoy their freedom, or perish in the glorious attempt. Approving Heaven beheld the favourite ark dancing upon the waves, and graciously preserved

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preserved it until the chosen families were brought in safety to these western regions. They found the land swarming with savages, who threatned death with every kind of torture. But savages, and death with torture, were far less terrible than slavery :---Nothing was so much the object of their abhorrence as a tyrant's power :---They knew that it was more safe to dwell with man in his most unpolished state than in a country where arbitrary power prevails. Even *anarchy itself*, that bugbear held up by the tools of power (though truly to be deprecated) is infinitely less dangerous to mankind than *arbitrary government*. *Anarchy* can be but of short duration ; for when men are at liberty to pursue that course which is most conducive to their own happiness, they will soon come into it, and from the rudest state of nature, order and good government must soon arise. But *tyranny*, when once established, entails its curse on a nation to the latest period of time ; unless some daring genius, inspired by Heaven, shall unappalled by danger, bravely form and execute the arduous design of restoring liberty and life to his enslaved, murdered country.

THE tools of power in every age have racked their inventions to justify the FEW in sporting with the happiness of the MANY ; and, having found their sophistry too weak to hold mankind in bondage, have impiously dared to force *religion*, the daughter of the king of Heaven, to become a prostitute in the service of Hell. They taught that princes,
honoured

AN O R A T I O N.

honoured with the name of christian, might bid defiance to the founder of their faith, might pillage pagan countries and deluge them with blood, only because they boasted themselves to be the disciples of that teacher who strictly charged his followers to *do to others as they would that others should do unto them.*

THIS country, having been discovered by an English subject in the year 1620, was (according to the system which the blind superstition of those times supported) deemed the property of the crown of England. Our ancestors, when they resolved to quit their native soil, obtained from King James a grant of certain lands in North-America. This they probably did to silence the cavils of their enemies, for it cannot be doubted, but they despised the pretended right which he claimed thereto. Certain it is that he might, with equal propriety and justice, have made them a grant of the planet Jupiter. And their subsequent conduct plainly shews that they were too well acquainted with humanity and the principles of natural equity to suppose that the grant gave them any right to take possession; they therefore entered into a treaty with the natives and bought from them the lands: Nor have I yet obtained any information that our ancestors ever *pleaded*, or that the natives ever *regarded* the grant from the English crown: The business was transacted by the parties in the same independant manner that it would have been, had neither of them ever known or heard of the island of Great Britain.

HAVING

HAVING become the honest proprietors of the soil, they immediately applied themselves to the cultivation of it ; and they soon beheld the virgin earth teeming with richest fruits, a grateful recompence for their unwearied toil. The fields began to wave with ripening harvests, and the late barren wilderness was seen to blossom like the rose. The savage natives saw with wonder the delightful change, and quickly formed a scheme to obtain *that* by fraud or force, *which* nature meant as the reward of industry alone. But the illustrious emigrants soon convinced the rude invaders ~~that~~ they were not less ready to take the field for battle than for labor ; and the insidious foe was driven from their borders as often as he ventured to disturb them. The crown of England looked with indifference on the contest ; our ancestors were left alone to combat with the natives.---- Nor is there any reason to believe, that it ever was intended by the one party, or expected by the other, that the *grantor* should defend and maintain the *grantees* in the peaceable possession of the lands named in the patents. And it appears plainly from the history of those times that neither the Prince nor the people of England thought themselves much interested in the matter. They had not then any idea of a thousandth part of those advantages which they since *have* and we are most heartily willing they should *still continue* to reap from us.

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BUT *when* at an infinite expence of toil and blood, this widely extended continent had been cultivated and defended : *When* the hardy adventurers justly expected that they and their descendants should peaceably have enjoyed the harvest of those fields which they had sown, and the fruit of those vineyards which they had planted, this country was *then* thought worthy the attention of the British ministry ; and the only justifiable and only successful means of rendering the colonies serviceable to Britain were adopted. By an intercourse of friendly offices, the two countries became so united in affection that they thought not of any distinct or separate interests, they found both countries flourishing and happy. Britain saw her commerce extended and her wealth increased ; her lands raised to an immense value, her fleets riding triumphant on the ocean, the terror of her arms spreading to every quarter of the globe. The colonist found himself free, and thought himself secure : He dwelt *under his own vine and under his own figtree and had none to make him afraid* : He knew indeed that by purchasing the manufactures of Great Britain he contributed to its greatness : He knew that all the wealth that his labour produced centered in Great Britain : But *that* far from exciting his envy filled him with the highest pleasure ; *that thought* supported him in all his trials. When the business of the day was past, he solaced himself with the *contemplation* or perhaps entertained his listening family with the *recital* of
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of some great, some glorious transaction which shines conspicuous in the history of Britain : Or perhaps his elevated fancy led him to foretell, with a kind of enthusiastic confidence, the glory, power and duration of an empire which should extend from one end of the earth to the other : He saw, or thought he saw, the British nation risen to a pitch of grandeur which cast a veil over the Roman glory, and, ravished with the praveiw, boasted a race of British Kings, whose names should eccho through those realms where Cyrus, Alexander, and the Cæsars were unknown ; *Princes* for whom millions of grateful subjects redeemed from slavery and pagan ignorance, should with thankful tongues offer up their prayers and praises to that transcendantly great and beneficent being *by whom Kings reign and Princes decree justice.*

THESE pleasing connections might have continued ; these delightful prospects might have been every day extending, and even the reveries of the most warm imagination might have been realized ; but unhappily for us, unhappily for Britain, the madness of an avaricious minister of state has drawn a sable curtain over the charming scene, and in its stead has brought upon the stage, discord, envy, hatred and revenge, with civil war close in their rear.

SOME demon in an evil hour suggested to a short sighted financier the hateful project of transferring the whole
property

property of the King's subjects in America to his subjects in Britain. The claim of the British parliament to tax the colonies can never be supported but by such a TRANSFER; for the right of the house of commons of Great Britain to originate any tax or to grant money is altogether derived from their being elected by the people of Great Britain to act for them, and the people of Great Britain cannot confer on their *representatives* a right to give or grant any thing which *they themselves* have not a right to give or grant *personally*. Therefore it follows that if the members chosen by the people of Great Britain to represent them in parliament have by virtue of their being so chosen, any right to give or grant American property, or to lay any tax upon the lands or persons of the colonists, it is because the lands and people in the colonies are bona fide, owned by, and justly belong to the people of Great Britain. But (as has been before observed) every man has a natural right to personal freedom, consequently a right to enjoy what is acquired by his own labor. And as it is evident that the property in this country has been acquired by our own labor, it is the duty of the people of Great Britain to produce some compact in which we have explicitly given up to them a right to dispose of our *persons* or *property*. Until this is done every attempt of their's, or of those whom they have deputed to act for them to give or grant any part of our property is directly repugnant to every principle of reason.

reason and natural justice. But I may boldly say that such a compact never existed, no, not even in imagination. Nevertheless the representatives of a nation, long famed for justice and the exercise of every noble virtue, have been prevailed on to adopt the fatal scheme ; and although the dreadful consequences of this wicked policy have already shaken the empire to its center ; yet still it is persisted in. Regardless of the voice of reason---deaf to the prayers and supplications---and unaffected with the flowing tears of suffering millions, the British ministry still hug the darling idol ; and every rolling year affords fresh instances of the absurd devotion with which they worship it. Alas ! how has the folly, the distraction of the British counsels blasted our swelling hopes and spread a gloom over this western hemisphere. The hearts of Britons and Americans, which lately felt the generous glow of mutual confidence and love, now burn with jealousy and rage. Though but of yesterday I recollect (deeply affected at the ill boding change) the happy hours that past whilst Britain and America rejoiced in the prosperity and greatness of each other, (Heaven grant those halcyon days may soon return.) But now the Briton too often looks on the American with an evious eye, taught to consider his just plea for the enjoyment of his earnings as the effect of pride and stubborn opposition to the parent country. Whilst the American beholds the Briton as the ruffian, ready *first* to take away his property, and *next*, what

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is dearer to every virtuous man, the liberty of his country.

WHEN the measures of administration had disgusted the colonies to the highest degree, and the people of Great Britain had by artifice and falshood been irritated against America, an army was sent over to enforce submission to certain acts of the British parliament, which reason scorned to countenance, and which placemen and pensioners were found unable to support.

MARTIAL law and the government of a well regulated City are so entirely different, that it has always been considered as improper to quarter troops in populous cities, as frequent disputes must necessarily arise between the citizen and the soldier, even if no previous animosities subsist. And it is further certain from a consideration of the nature of mankind, as well as from constant experience, that standing armies always endanger the liberty of the subject. But when the people on the one part, considered the army as sent to enslave them, and the army on the other were taught to look on the people as in a state of rebellion; it was but just to fear the most disagreeable consequences. Our fears, we have seen, were but too well grounded.

THE many injuries offered to the town I pass over in silence. I cannot now mark out the path which led to that unequalled scene of horror, the sad remembrance of which,
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takes the full possession of my soul. The sanguinary theatre again opens itself to view. The baleful images of terror croud around me, and discontented ghosts with hallow groans appear to solemnize the anniversary of the FIFTH of MARCH.

APPROACH we then the melancholy walk of death. Hither let me call the gay companion, here let him drop a farewell tear upon that body which so late he saw vigorous and warm with social mirth---Hither let me lead the tender mother to weep over her beloved son---Come widowed mourner, here satiate thy grief; behold thy murdered husband gasping on the ground, and to complete the pompous show of wretchedness bring in each hand thy infant children to bewail their father's fate---Take heed, ye orphan babes, least whilst your streaming eyes are fixed upon the ghastly corpse, *your feet slide on the stones bespattered with your father's brains.* * Enough? This tragedy need not be heightened by an infant weltering in the blood of him that gave him birth. Nature reluctant shrinks already from the view, and the chilled blood rolls slowly backward to its fountain. We wildly stare about, and with amazement, ask, who spread this ruin round us? What wretch has dared deface the image of his God? Has haughty France or cruel Spain sent forth her myrmidons? Has the grim savage rushed again from the far distant wilderness? Or does some fiend, fierce from the depth of Hell, with all the rancorous

* After Mr. GRAY had been shot through the body and had fallen dead on the ground—a bayonet was pushed through his skull, part of the bone being broken his brains fell out upon the pavement.

ous malice which the apostate damned can feel, twang her destructive bow and hurl her deadly arrows at our breast? No. None of these---but, how astonishing! It is the hand of Britain that inflicts the wound. The arms of George our rightful King have been employed to shed that blood which freely would have flown at his command when justice or the honour of his crown had called his subjects to the field.

BUT pity, grief, astonishment, with all the softer movements of the soul must now give way to stronger passions. Say, fellow-citizens, what dreadful thought now swells your heaving bosoms---You fly to arms---Sharp indignation flashes from each eye---Revenge gnashes her iron teeth---Death grins an hideous smile secure to drench his greedy jaws in human gore--Whilst hovering furies darken all the air.

BUT stop, my bold adventurous countrymen, stain not your weapons with the blood of Britons. Attend to reason's voice---Humanity puts in her claim---and sues to be again admitted to her wonted seat, the bosom of the brave. Revenge is far beneath the noble mind. Many perhaps, compelled to rank among the vile assassins, do from their inmost souls, detest the barbarous action. The winged death, shot from your arms, may chance to pierce some breast that bleeds, already for your injured country.

THE storm subsides---a solemn pause ensues---You spare upon condition they depart. They go---they quit your city--

ity—they no more shall give offence.—Thus closes the important drama.

And could it have been conceived that we again shou'd have seen a British army in our land, sent to enforce obedience to acts of parliament destructive of our liberty. But the royal ear far distant from this western world, has been assaulted by the tongue of slander; and villains, traitorous alike to king and country, have prevail'd upon a gracious prince to cloath his countenance with wrath, and to erect the hostile banner against a people ever affectionate and loyal to him and his illustrious predecessors of the house of Hanover. Our streets are again filled with armed men: Our harbour is crouded with ships of war; but these cannot intimidate us; our liberty must be preserved; it is far dearer than *life*, we hold it even dear as our *allegiance*; we must defend it against the attacks of *friends* as well as *enemies*; we cannot suffer even BRITONS to ravish it from us.

No longer could we reflect with generous pride on the heroic actions of our American fore-fathers,—no longer boast our origin from that far famed island, whose warlike sons have so often drawn their well-tryed swords to save her from the ravages of tyranny; could we but for a moment entertain the thought of giving up our liberty. The man who meanly will submit to wear a *shackle*, contemns the noblest gift of Heaven, and impiously affronts the God that made him free.

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IT was a maxim of the Roman people, which eminently conduced to the greatness of that state, never to despair of the common-wealth. The maxim may prove as salutary to us now, as it did to them. Short sighted mortals see not the numerous links of small and great events, which form the chain on which the fate of kings and nations is suspended. Ease and prosperity, tho' pleasing for a day, have often sunk a people into effeminacy and sloth. Hardships and dangers, (tho' we forever strive to shun them,) have frequently call'd forth such virtues, as have commanded the applause and reverence of an admiring world. Our country loudly calls you to be circumspect, vigilant, active and brave. Perhaps, (all gracious Heaven avert it) perhaps, the power of Britain, a nation great in war, by some malignant influence, may be employed to enslave you: But let not even this discourage you. Her arms, 'tis true, have fill'd the world with terror: her troops have reap'd the laurels of the field: her fleets have rode triumphant on the sea—And *when or where* did you, my Countrymen, depart inglorious from the field of fight? * You too can

* The Patience with which this People have borne the repeated Injuries which have been heap'd upon them, and their unwillingness to take any sanguinary Measures, has very injudiciously been ascribed to Cowardice, by Persons both here and in Great-Britain. I most heartily wish that an Opinion so erroneous in itself, and so fatal in its consequences, might be utterly removed before it be too late: And I think nothing further necessary to convince every intelligent Man, that the Conduct of this People is owing to the *tender Regard* which they have for their Fellow Men, and an *utter Abhorrence to the shedding of human Blood*, than a little Attention to their general Temper and Disposition, discovered when they cannot be supposed to be under any Apprehension of Danger to themselves.—I will only mention the universal Detestation which they shew to every Act of Cruelty, by whom and upon whomsoever committed. The mild Spirit of their Laws, the very few Crimes to which capital Penalties are annexed, and the very great Backwardness which both Courts and Juries discover, in condemning Persons charged with *capital Crimes*.—But if any should think this Observation not to the Purpose, I readily appeal to those Gentlemen of the Army who have been in the Camp, or in the Field, with the Americans.

can shew the trophies of your *forefather's* victories and your *own*; can name the fortresses and battles you have won; and many of you count the honourable scars of wounds received, whilst fighting for your king and country.

WHERE justice is the standard, Heaven is the warrior's shield: But conscious guilt unnerves the arm that lifts the sword against the innocent. Britain united with these colonies, by commerce and affection—by interest and blood, may mock the threats of France and Spain: May be the seat of universal empire. But should America either by *force*, or those more dangerous engines, *luxury* and *corruption*, ever be brought into a state of vassalage, Britain must lose *her* freedom also. No longer shall she sit the *empress* of the sea:—Her ships no more shall waft her thunders over the wide ocean:—The *wreath* shall wither on her temples:—Her weakened arm shall be unable to defend her coasts: and she at last must bow her venerable head to some proud foreigner's despotic rule.

BUT if from past events we may venture to form a judgment of the future, we justly may expect that the devices of our enemies will but increase the triumphs of our country. I *must* indulge a hope that *Britain's* liberty as well as *ours*, will eventually be preserved by the virtue of America.

THE attempt of the British parliament to raise a revenue from America, and our denial of their right to do it, have excited an almost

most universal enquiry into the rights of mankind in general, and of British subjects in particular; the necessary result of which must be such a liberality of sentiment, and such a jealousy of those in power as will, better than an adamant wall, secure us against the future approaches of despotism.

THE malice of the *Boston Port-Bill* has been defeated in a very considerable degree, by giving *you* an opportunity of *deserving*, and *our brethren* in this and our sister-colonies an opportunity of *bestowing* those benefactions which have delighted your friends and astonished your enemies, not only in America, but in Europe also. And what is more valuable still, the sympathetic feelings for a brother in distress, and the grateful emotions excited in the breast of him who finds relief, must forever endear each to the other, and form those indissoluble bonds of friendship and affection, on which the preservation of our rights so evidently depend.

THE mutilation of our charter has made every other colony jealous for its own; for *this*, if once submitted to by us, would set on float the property and government of every British settlement upon the continent. If Charters are not deemed sacred, how miserably precarious is every thing founded upon them.

EVEN the sending troops to put these acts in execution is not without advantages to us. The exactness and beauty of their Discipline inspire our youth with ardor in the pursuit of military knowledge. Charles the *Invincible*, taught Peter the *Great*, the art:

art of war. The battle of Pultowa convinced Charles of the proficiency Peter had made.

OUR Country is in danger, but not to be despaired of. Our enemies are numerous and powerful—but we have many friends, determine to BE FREE, and Heaven and Earth will aid the RESOLUTION. On you depend the fortunes of America. You are to decide the important question, on which rest the happiness and liberty of millions yet unborn. Act worthy of yourselves. The faltering tongue of hoary age calls on you to support your country. The lisping infant raises its suppliant hands, imploring defence against the monster slavery. Your fathers look from their celestial seats with smiling approbation on their sons, who boldly stand forth in the cause of virtue; but sternly frown upon the inhuman miscreant, who, to secure the loaves and fishes to himself, would breed a serpent to destroy his children.

BUT, pardon me, my fellow-citizens, I know you want not zeal or fortitude. You will maintain your rights or perish in the generous struggle. However difficult the combat, you never will decline it when freedom is the prize. An independence on Great-Britain is not our aim. No, our wish is, that Britain and the Colonies may like the oak and ivy, grow and increase in strength together. But whilst the infatuated plan of making one part of the empire slaves to the other, is persisted in; the interest and safety of *Britain*, as well as the *Colonies*, require that the wise measures recommended by the honourable, the continental Congress, be steadily pursued; whereby the

the unnatural contest between a parent honoured, and a child beloved, may probably be brought to such an issue. as that the peace and happiness of both may be established upon a lasting basis. But if these pacific measures are ineffectual, and it appears that the only way to safety is, thro' fields of blood, I know you will not turn your faces from your foes ; but will undauntedly press forward, until tyranny is trodden under foot, and you have fixed your adored goddess LIBERTY, fast by a BRUNSWICK'S side, on the American Throne.

You *then*, who nobly have espoused your Country's cause, who generously have sacrificed wealth and ease—who have despised the pomp and show of tinsel'd greatness—refused the summons to the festive board, been deaf to the alluring calls of luxury and mirth, *who* have forsaken the downy pillow, to keep your vigils by the midnight lamp, for the salvation of your invaded country, that you might break the fowler's snare, and disappoint the vulture of his prey, *you* then will reach that harvest of renown which you so justly have deserved. Your country shall pay her grateful tribute of applause. Even the children of your most inveterate enemies, ashamed to tell from whom they sprang, while they in secret curse their stupid, cruel parents, shall join the general voice of gratitude to those who broke the fetters which their father's forg'd.

HAVING

HAVING redeemed your Country, and secured the blessing to future generations, *who* fired by your example, shall emulate your virtues, and learn from *you* the heavenly art of making millions happy ;—with heart-felt joy, with transports all your own, YOU cry, the GLORIOUS WORK IS DONE. Then drop the mantle to some young ELISHA, and take your seats with kindred spirits in your native skies.

F I N I S.

HAVING received your country and secured the blessing to
your generation, who are by your example shall emulate your
virtue and love from you the heavenly art of making millions
happy: with heartfelt joy, with wisdom all your own you
of the glorious work is done. Then drop the mantle to
these young artists, 46 Yr 02 your tears with kindled souls in
your native land.

AMEN

